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MINUTE BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE VICEROY ON THE MYSORE FAMINE.

Mr. C. A. Elliott's Report upon the Mysore Famine will be laid before my honourable colleagues in the Government of India; it will be forwarded to Her Majesty's Government; and it will be published as soon as possible. When I directed the preparation of this report, there was ground for fearing that parts of Northern India might be afflicted by severe famine in 1878-79; and I was desirous that a history of the difficulties, failures, and successes in the Mysore Famine should be in hands of authorities who might have to deal with a similar calamity in Upper India. The rainy season of 1878 has, however, ended much more favourably than it began. I hope that in no part of India will famine have to be combated in the year 1879. But I believe the present history of the Mysore Famine will be of the greatest use to Indian authorities who may hereafter have to contend against a similar calamity.

2. The country of Mysore contained, at the census of 1871, a population of 5,055,000, nine tenths of whom live by the land. In ordinary years it produces about 25 per cent more food than its population can consume; its land is held by a body of well-to-do peasant proprietors, who in average years have a comfortable surplus income; 15 per cent of its cultivated land is irrigated, mainly from tanks; it is connected with the coast by a railway, and it is traversed by a net-work of fairly good roads; it had prospered for many years, although either the early or the latter rainfall was occasionally scanty over a part of the province. Mysore had not been visited by famine for fifty years. It seemed, therefore, as if the province and the people were in as good condition for withstanding a famine as any Indian province or population can ever be. In one respect, however, Mysore was at a disadvantage; it possessed only 60 miles of railway, passing through a corner of one district and into the heart of another; six districts out of the eight, into which the province is divided, had thus no railway communications at all. The beginning of the recent calamity was the partial failure of the rains in 1875; the rainfall was from one-third to two-thirds of the average; much of the food crop was lost; but the stocks of food in Mysore have always been large; and this failure caused only temporary or occasional distress, for the price of food did not rise to double the ordinary rates. In the year 1876 the rainfall again was very short; barely a third of the ordinary harvest was reaped; matters were aggravated by the fact that crops had failed in the adjacent districts of Madras and Bombay; and the middle of December 1876 famine had begun. In the months of April and May the usual spring showers came, and hope revived. But the early rains of 1877 famine increased in the land; and it was not until the bountiful latter rains

and October 1877 that the pressure of famine began to abate. During the eight months of extreme famine, no crops were reaped; the price of food ranged from three to six times the ordinary rates; and for the common people there were no means of earning wages outside the relief-works. Even in 1877-78, though some relief was felt, the yield of the harvest was less than half the food-crop of an ordinary year. From November 1877 till the present time of writing, the price of food has ranged at nearly three times the rate of ordinary years. Thus during the past three years, the people of Mysore have suffered from failure of harvest and famine prices, and at one time a water-famine was apprehended: but from that additional calamity the province has been spared.

3. Mr. Elliott's report shews how famine affected the country and the people of Mysore, and how the British Government of Mysore attempted to mitigate its evils. Early in the autumn of 1876, when the first year of drought was nearly over, symptoms of the coming disaster were reported to the Local Government. The poorer classes of the population began to lose heart, and multitudes moved off towards the coffee districts in the western hills, where the people of Mysore had been wont to find employment and wages for many years past. In times of famine, it has been the custom of the Indian Government to give employment and wages on public works to the destitute poor, to afford gratuitous relief to those who are unable to labour, and to make small loans to petty landholders, so as to enable them to tide over the hardest time. In one exceptional famine the Government had imported food from a distance to feed the people of the stricken province. In September 1876 relief-works were opened in parts of Mysore. In October pressure on the people increased; more relief-works were opened. The Government, after reviewing the situation and prospects, decided that private enterprise must be left to import food for the replenishment of the exhausted food-stocks, but that the State would open relief-works, would assist in giving gratuitous aid to the helpless, and would postpone its demand for land-rents. These orders, unfortunately, as was proved by subsequent events, favoured recourse to small works scattered over the country, and served to support the Chief Commissioner's action in a direction that ultimately led to results not contemplated at the time when they were issued.

4. By the month of December severe famine had declared itself over an area containing about 3½ millions out of the 5 millions which constitute the population of Mysore. The Government adhered to the programme of October, which was good so far as it went. But there was a distinct failure to realize, or even to estimate, what would be the full effect of the famine on the country; and how much would have to be done and spent before favourable harvests in 1877 could give appreciable relief to the people. The objective of the Government efforts being thus undefined and indistinct, no system was devised, and no sufficient organization was created, for conducting relief operations on the necessary scale. Judging after the event, and by the light of the present report, we can see that, even if imported food and old stocks sufficed to feed the people, there must have been from 500,000 to 800,000 people of the labouring classes who could not procure food at famine prices, unless the Government paid them wages on relief-works, or otherwise provided them with the means of living, until employment in the fields was again available. The Mysore Government and its officers were, at the beginning of the crisis, much swayed by a desire to restrict expenditure as far as possible,—a sentiment which in a poor country like India is always praiseworthy, and which, in the present case, derived additional weight from the desire to transfer the Province of Mysore to its Native Prince with uncrippled resources.

5. The absence of any careful forecast of the troubles that were coming upon ysore caused the Government to attempt to meet the difficulty with the same staff and e organization that sufficed for ordinary times. In India, operations for the relief n rural tracts have to be begun and carried on, down to the minutest detail, by ent and its agents. The labour involved in such an undertaking is enormous, y staff of the Mysore Province was, without special aid and special super-

vision, quite unable to meet the requirements of the occasion. One most serious consequence was that the Government and its superior officers remained to some extent in ignorance of the condition of the country and the people, and misunderstood some of the phenomena that were reported. For instance, when it was reported that people would not come to the relief-works in a particular district, the Government did not learn until it was too late that mismanagement of the relief-works had caused the famine-stricken people either to wander off and die, or to go home and starve. An inadequate organization and an inefficient system were unfortunately prolonged by that insufficiency of information which was their natural result. The situation required that the whole power of the Government in all departments throughout the province, aided by a largely increased organization, should be directed to the relief of famine, on a system pre-arranged down to details, but with sufficient scope for personal discretion. Had this been done in December 1876, as it afterwards was done in September 1877, the facts of the Mysore Famine would have been earlier ascertained, and the necessary measures of relief could have been taken from the first. More money would indeed have been spent; but disorganization and waste would have been avoided; while many thousands of lives would have been saved.

6. Chapter III of Mr. Elliott's report tells the history of the famine from the autumn of 1876 to April 1877. From December till March matters grew worse; 500 tons of food (enough to support 900,000 people) were imported daily by railway: yet the price of food ranged, during those months, at from 13 to 15 lbs a rupee; that is to say, at four to five times the ordinary rates. When Sir Richard Temple visited Mysore, on behalf of the Supreme Government, and conferred with the Bangalore authorities, the real condition and prospects of the people had not been gauged by the Local Government. Statistics of the relief operations, which were then of old date and which now appear to have been incorrect, were placed before him; Sir Richard Temple advised in accordance with the information furnished him; and the chief change of system and organization which he then advocated was the immediate institution of a village-to-village, house-to-house relief, throughout the famine districts, in order to ascertain the real condition of the people, and prevent them dying at their houses. Orders were issued by the Local Government for acting on this suggestion; but, partly in consequence of absence of detailed instructions, and mainly because no sufficient staff for accomplishing the task was sanctioned, the village enquiry was extremely imperfect and village relief was not actually attempted.

7. During the months of December to March the numbers of people relieved were—

	On relief and other works.	By gratuitous relief.	Total.
January	31,042	6,498	37,530
February	63,348	22,462	85,810
March	69,564	23,295	92,859

But the relief given was not sufficient: the people took to wandering aimlessly from their homes where they had no food; the death-rate increased terribly; and deaths from starvation occurred. No change in the system had been made up to the month of April, when the usual spring showers fell; and it was hoped that the end of the famine had come. This hope, for which indeed there was up till the month of June some good ground, may have deterred the Local Government from reforming and strengthening the relief organization. During the months of April and May, the relief given on public works was materially contracted; while at the same time gratuitous relief was given in the shape of cooked food, at scores of central places in different parts of the province, to rapidly increasing numbers of people. As the month of June 1877 wore on, and as July was apparent that the early rains were going to fail again, and for the third cession. Panic and mortality among the people increased. The numbers

employment on the relief-works continued to decrease; but multitudes thronged the relief-kitchens where food was given to the poor. By the middle of August 1877, the famine was at its worst; the numbers relieved by the Government had been—

	On relief and other works.	By gratuitous relief at the food-kitchens.	Total.
May ..	66,503	102,399	168,902
June ..	56,781	110,805	167,586
July ..	47,609	137,560	185,169
August ..	49,200	194,083	243,283

Among the poor creatures who were wandering over the country in quest of food, the mortality was very great. During those five months there died at the relief-kitchens tens of thousands to whom help came too late; and in the streets of Bangalore, the chief city of the province, the bodies of those who had died during the night, were picked up morning after morning by the score. Money was by that time being spent on relief at the rate of nearly £100,000 a month; but the organization had not been strengthened; the expenditure had not been systematized; and the Government officers of Mysore, many of whom worked zealously to relieve the distress, and to make the Government aid go as far as possible, were unable to cope with the gigantic dimensions of the calamity. The concluding pages of Chapter IV of the report shew how and why the relief-works, which in Indian famines are and ought to be the backbone of the relief system, failed to furnish any appreciable aid to the distressed population. I am afraid that the ill-success of the Mysore relief-works must be attributed mainly to mismanagement; and I feel that the Government of India must accept its share in the responsibility for that mismanagement in a province that was under its own control, inasmuch as it did not appreciate in their proper force the facts that underlay the reported results, and did not at an earlier date insist on the application of a sufficient remedy.

8. Before passing from the consideration of the period when the famine was at its height, I would observe that, even at the worst time, private trade poured into Mysore as much grain as the railway could carry, and would have sent much more if additional means of carriage had been available. At the same time supplies of food were carried by traders up the steep ascents of the Western Ghat mountains from the Malabar coast districts into Mysore. Food was dear, to a point beyond the memory of living men; but still food was to be had by those who could pay for it. And whatever may have been the shortcomings of the relief organization, the present history of the Mysore Famine does not shake the opinion of the Government of India,—acted upon throughout 1877,—that it is best to leave private traders to import food into a famine-stricken country while it has means of communication with distant markets.

9. Chapter V of Mr. Elliott's report gives an account of the arrangements made to carry out an improved relief system on the lines laid down by the Government of India during the visit of myself and my colleague Sir Alexander Arbuthnot to Southern India in August and September 1877. In measuring the success of those operations, it must be remembered that, at the time of their commencement, there was a most favourable change in the weather; and that, after September 1877, the gloom of that great calamity which up- till September 1878 continued to over-shadow Mysore, was never without some gleams of hope; gleams which, with one dark interval in February 1878, gradually brightened as the season advanced.

The first step taken in September 1877 was to reinforce the Mysore staff with trained officers and volunteers, officers from Her Majesty's army, whose duty was to direct rations; with Engineers to manage relief-works and organize famine labour; with ers to arrange famine hospitals and tend the sick. The next step was to threads of famine administration into one hand, and to lay down detailed

rules for the guidance of famine officers of all grades. And the last step, which followed close upon the others, was to effect a thorough and intelligent inspection of all the famine operations throughout the country. It is now only too clear that all this ought to have been done in December 1876. The report tells of the many difficulties which were met in the management of the relief-works; in getting the people to come to these works; in employing persons in different stages of weakness, so as not to overtask them, whilst giving them some incentive to live and work; in clearing the relief-kitchens and carrying the inmates, with their consent, to the works if they were fit for labour, or to their homes if they were past work; in establishing and working a system whereby house-ridden folk were relieved at their homes; in preventing peculation; in securing for the province a moderate outturn of useful work in exchange for relief given to the able-bodied; and lastly, in helping the ryots, to recover their position and independence, by a judicious distribution of the alms sent from Great Britain, Ireland, and the British Colonies, for the aid of the famine-stricken people of Southern India. I cannot forbear acknowledging here the munificient liberality shewn by the people of England and her colonies in sending so great a sum of money, within a few months, to aid their Indian fellow-subjects. I believe that any of the generous contributors to the famine fund, who may read paragraphs 107 to 111 of this chapter of the Mysore report, will feel that their charity was judiciously administered, and that it did vast good to an important class of their fellow-subjects.

10. Mr. Elliott shews that the famine has cost the province of Mysore from 800,000 to 1,000,000 lives; that it *must* cost the Mysore treasury at least 1 million sterling, and *may* cost nearly 1¼ millions or a full year's revenue; whilst the loss of produce, live-stock, and other property during these three disastrous years cannot have been much less than 9¼ millions sterling. I accept, subject to such further light as the Famine Commission may throw on this difficult question, the conclusion that a somewhat larger expenditure on relief, judiciously administered, might have saved a large number of the lives that have been lost, and that such further expenditure should have been incurred in the material interests of the province, irrespective of other considerations. But I cannot but feel that in great famines there must be a limit to the expenditure which is practically possible for the relief of distress. The interests of the country, of the survivors, and of future generations, require that this fact should be recognized. And I fear that, when great famines come, it will not be practically possible to prevent a serious increase to the normal mortality, or so to alleviate all distress as to prevent very extreme suffering to the people. It would be premature for me to draw conclusions for guidance in future famines from Mr. Elliott's report. The Famine Commission will, no doubt, weigh fully the facts recorded therein, and I commend the report to their careful consideration.

I am deeply indebted to Mr. Elliott for his excellent report, which tells truthfully and graphically the story of much human suffering, borne with patient endurance characteristic of the people of India, and gives a faithful account of the early failure and subsequent success in relieving a great population from the dreadful effects of prolonged famine. I recognize that Mr. Elliott, when reporting on the Mysore Famine, as he was instructed to do so with fearless frankness, has been obliged to reflect upon the conduct of some of the officers who afterwards proved his valued coadjutors. But in so doing, he has, I conceive, discharged the unpleasant duty which lay upon him with much impartiality, and with all possible consideration to the persons concerned, avoiding as far as possible all matter that had not a direct and important bearing on the very painful series of events with the close of which he was deputed to deal, and of which he has become the narrator.

11. The thanks of the Government of India are due to Mr. Elliott for the ab
and energy with which he carried out their famine policy in Mysore. Though
vince and its people were new to him, he promptly mastered the position;
and directed relief operations with a patience and good sense that overcar
and with the fullest tenderness for the people in dire calamity. To Mr

the Chief Engineer, and to Mr. Wingate, the Famine Secretary, I tender the hearty acknowledgments of the Government for the skill, knowledge, and zeal they brought to bear on the difficult questions connected with the conduct of relief-works and the organization of gratuitous relief. But these three officers could have done little if they had not received full support and co-operation from Mr. Saunders, the Chief Commissioner, from the Members of the Mysore Commission, and from the many officers who were lent by other Local Governments, and by His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief, for relief-work in Mysore. If there was failure during the early months of the famine, all ranks of the service throughout the province took their share in the relief operations of the later months, when those operations were adequately directed on a proper system. The thanks of the Government are especially due to

Lieutenant-Colonel A. C. Hay,	Commissioner.
Captain E. S. Ludlow,	} Deputy Commissioners.
Mr. B. Krishnaiengar, C. S. I.,	
Captain Gordon Cumming,	
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Captain Macintire.	
Mr. E. C. Ozanne,	of the Bombay Civil Service.
Mr. C. Madaiya,	Assistant Commissioner.
Mr. C. Srinivas Iengar,	} Munsiffs.
Mr. Annaji Rao,	
Mr. B. Mari Gangaiya,	} volunteer Relief Officers of Bangalore.
Mr. Vaidyalingam Modaliar,	
Captain Bowen, R. E.,	Superintending Engineer.
Mr. Penny,	} Executive Engineers.
Lieutenant Kensington, R. E.,	

The thanks of the Government of India have already been conveyed to Mr. J. D. Gordon, C. S. I., and the Members of the Bangalore Central Relief Committee; and also to the military officers who volunteered for, and did excellent service in, the campaign against the Mysore Famine.

The 14th November 1878.

LYTTON.